

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 VANCOU 01253 232112Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

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FEA-01 /092 W

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R 232030Z DEC 75

FM AMCONSUL VANCOUVER

TO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2500

UNCLAS VANCOUVER 1253

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CA

SUBJECT: NEW BC GOVERNMENT SWORN IN, IMPLICATIONS FOR THE US

1. THE NEW PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF BC WAS SWORN IN TODAY WITH SOCIAL CREDIT LEADER BILL BENNETT AS PREMIER. FOURTEEN CABINET MEMBERS WERE APPOINTED(VERSUS 18 UNDER NDP) WITH FEW SURPRISES. THREE EX-LIBERAL MLA'S ALL GIVEN MINISTRIES ALONG WITH ONE CONSERVATIVE DEFECTOR AND EX-LIBERAL MP JACK DAVIS GETTING CABINET POSTS AS WELL. NEW CABINET A MIXTURE OF OLD GUARD AND NEW FACES. SEVERAL DUAL PORTFOLIOS WHICH BENNETT SAID WOULD REMAIN SO ONLY THROUGH 1976. DETAILS BY SEPARATE AIRGRAM.

2. NEW PREMIER BENNETT HAS MAINTAINED ALMOST TOTAL SILENCE SINCE ELECTION 10 DAYS AGO AND HAS SAID NEW SESSION OF LEGISLATURE WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE HELD BEFORE SPRING. HOWEVER, BASED ON CAMPAIGN STATEMENTS AND SOCRED CONVENTION WHICH ENDED JUST BEFORE ELECTION WAS CALLED, SOME CHANGES IN ATTITUDE TOWARDS US AND ISSUES AFFECTING US CAN BE EXPECTED.

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PAGE 02 VANCOU 01253 232112Z

EM FOREIGN OWNERSHIP OF LAND: SOCRED CONVENTION REFUSED TO ENDORSE RESOLUTION CALLING FOR FOREIGN LAND OWNERSHIP BAN AND BENNETT SAID DURING CAMPAIGN NO SUCH LEGISLATION CONTEMPLATED. SOCRED PARTY PRESIDENT HYNDMAN HOWEVER, AFTER ELECTION, SUGGESTED THAT "NATIONAL" CONTROL OF FOREIGN OWNERSHIP OF LAND SHOULD BE EXPLORED. UNLIKELY THAT THE LAND ISSUE WILL BE A PRIORITY ITEM OF NEW GOVERNMENT.

4. FOREIGN INVESTMENT: IMPROVING INVESTMENT CLIMATE IN BC

WAS ONE OF BENNETT'S CAMPAIGN PLEDGES. WHILE NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED, FOREIGN CAPITAL INVESTMENT WILL PROBABLY BE ENCOURAGED BY THE SOCREDS.

5. ENVIRONMENT: BENNETT HAS ESTABLISHED A NEW MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT WHICH, PRESUMABLY, WILL DEAL WITH WEST COAST TANKER TRAFFIC, SKAGIT, AND OTHER ISSUES. NEITHER OF THESE SUBJECTS MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY DURING THE CAMPAIGN THOUGH SOCRED PRESIDENT HYNDMAN, ONCE AGAIN AFTER THE ELECTION, SEEMED TO ENDORSE FLOODING OF THE SKAGIT VALLEY. QUESTIONED ABOUT HIS STATEMENT HE SAID THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAD NOT YET REACHED A DECISION ON THE MATTER. NEW GOVERNMENT EXPECTED TO PLACE HIGH IMPORTANCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS WHICH MAY AFFECT PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF SAGE CREEK COALFIELDS.

6. GAS PRICING: BENNETT REFUSED TO BE PINNED DOWN ON WHETHER HE WOULD TRY FOR INCREASE OF NATURAL GAS EXPORT PRICE TO DOLLARS 2.25 AS PROPOSED BY BARRETT. HE DID CALL FOR FAIR PRICE FOR EXPORT GAS BUT MADE IT SOUND LIKE HE WOULD NOT PRESS THE ISSUE WITH OTTAWA BUT RATHER LET THE FEDS TAKE THE LEAD. FEELING HERE IS THAT BENNETT GOVERNMENT WILL REACH ACCORD WITH FEDS ON NEW EXPORT PRICE BUT WILL LOBBY CONSIDERABLY LESS ACTIVELY THAN NDP FOR ACCELERATED INCREASES.

7. COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY: DURING CAMPAIGN BENNETT SAID HE FAVOURED RENEGOTIATION OF COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY "IF MORE

FAVORABLE TERMS CAN BE OBTAINED." ONCE AGAIN, AS WITH GAS, IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT THE ISSUE WILL BE A PRIORITY ITEM FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT THOUGH THE SOCREDS MAY PRESS OTTAWA TO TAKE SOME ACTION.

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PAGE 03 VANCOU 01253 232112Z

IM GENERAL: SEVERAL TIMES DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGN NDP PREMIER BARRETT CRITICIZED US INTEREST OR INVOLVEMENT IN BC POLITICS. BENNETT REACTED TO BARRETT'S OUTBURSTS BY STATING THAT THE SOCREDS WOULD NOT WAGE AN ANTI-AMERICAN CAMPAIGN. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT BENNETT WILL BE LESS INCLINED TO AUTOMATICALLY TAKE AN ANTI-AMERICAN STAND ON ANY ISSUE INVOLVING THE PROVINCE AND THE US. PRESUMABLY THIS

MEANS, IF NOTHING ELSE, THAT BENNETT WILL BE MORE OPEN TO  
DISCUSSION OF ISSUES.

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